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REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF PADIS (1982-1983) AND PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 1984-1987, WITH PROJECTIONS UP TO 1989

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REPORT ON PADIS AND EXAMINATION OF WORK PROGRAMME (1984-1989) WITH PROJECTIONS UPTO 1989: SUMMARY

A. REPORT

I. ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRAL COORDINATION OFFICE (CCO)

1. The establishment of the CCO is by far the most remarkable achievement of the PADIS programme. The operations of the substantive sections have unmistakably demonstrated the technical soundness of the PADIS programme. While the coordination work that has been started with the inauguration of PADIS has just started to bear fruit as the national centres in Benin and the Sudan prepare to start operation.

2. Five issues of DEVINDEX-AFRICA, a retrospective index to development litrature on Africa, have been prepared published and circulated by August, 1983. By December, 1983 twelve issues will have been prepared, eight of them under circulation.

3. At the time of the writing of this report the first volume of the Directory of African Experts containing 3,500 references was prepared and under print. By March 1984 the preliminary phase of the "Pan-African Referral Information System for Technical Cooperation Among African Countries" project will have been completed and the second volume of the Directory of African Experts published and released.

4. Two international data bases, LABORDOC and UNDIESA, have been acquired and are available for retrospective searches at the PADIS/CCO.

5. Technical assistance has been provided to ECA Population and Trade Divisions for the design of the Population Information Network for Africa (POPIN-Africa) and the Trade and Finance Information System for Africa (TF-Africa), respectively.

6. Technical and material support was provided to the ECA Statistics Division to enable it to construct a statistical data base.

7. A pan-African meeting of documentation, computer and information scientists was organized. A technical working group has met to study PADIS technical standards and theri compatibility with other systems. The reports of both meetings have been published and circulated in English and French.

8. Two national seminars were organized in Guinea and Zimbabwe on the role of information in national development in collaboration with the respective Governments. A training workshop was conducted, in collaboration with RIPS, on population information and documentation.

9. A total number of 13 trainees from eight African countries (Botswana, Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Rwanda, Senegal) have been received to accustom them to the operations and management of modern information processing installations.

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL CENTRES

10. The CCC had submitted proposals to all African countries for the establishment of their respective national information and documentation centres (NIDCs). Favorable replies were received from several African countries, some of which have approached operation stages (e.g. Benin, Sudan) and others are at different stages of negotiation (Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Nigeria, Zaire). In addition, the Governments of Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia have designated their national centres as participating centres of the PADIS regional system.

11. At the time of the writing of this report, the establishment of the national information and documentation centres of the Republic of Benin and the Republic of the Sudan was being finalized, i.e. the national counterpart institutions identified, project documents signed, the physical facilities to house the centres provided and the equipments ordered. It is anticipated the centres will be operating by January 1984.

12. The 'Centre National de Documentation' of Morocco will shortly (before end of 1983) receive material assistance in terms of a disc drive and six interactive terminals to enable it to expand its national network.

13. If the NIDCs of Benin and the Sudan receive the full computer configuration as planned (fourth quarter, 1983), the installation and testing of equipment will be conducted during the last quarter of 1983.

14. A series of preparatory missions are planned (for late 1983) to negotiate the establishment of NIDCs in the countries that have responded favorably to the PADIS proposals as indicated in paragraph 10 above.

15. The identification of and negotiations with prospective donors to complement the resources being made available by PADIS and the Governments has been satisfactory. The United Nations Development Programme and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) have made renewed committments to support the national components of the PADIS system.

III. ESTABLISHMENT OF SUB-REGIONAL CENTRES

16. As discussed in another paper, (document) the establishment of national centres has not been an easy taks mostly due to the considerable amount of initial investment NIDCs require and the reluctance of the majority of African countries to allocate scarce resources for this endeavour vis a vis other pressing priorities.

As a result, suitably organized subrregional information and documentation systems (SRIDS) were considered as valuable transitions. This is going to be possible by placing the expensive facilities of the centre (data processing equipment and higly skilled personnel) at the sub-regional centres and to enable a group of national centres benefit from these facilities.

17. With this in mind, consultative meetings were organized for the Eastern and Southern Africa, Northern Africa, Western Africa and Central African sub-regions between January and March 1983. The proposals presented by PADIS were endorsed by the sub-regional groupings except in Northern Africa where Member States felt to further investigate the proposed in view of their relatively more developed national information and documentation (I&D) infrastructures.

IV. ESTABLISHMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATING CENTRES

18. PADIS had provided advisory assistance to the African Regional Centre for Science and Technology for the setting up of an information system on scientific and technological aspects. The design of the system has been finalized and the report of the exercise has been circulated to prospective donors for their consideration.

19. A similar exercise has been conducted for the design of a mineral resources data base in collaboration with the Eastern and Southern Africa Mineral Resources Development Centre and the ECA Mineral Unit. PADIS participated at a seminar sponsored by the former.

20. Advisory assistance for the design of similar systems has been initiated with the African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (Tangiers, Morocco), Pan-African Institute for Development (Yaounde, Cameroun) and the Organization Africaine pour la Proprite Intellectuel.

V. DATA TRANSMISSION NETWORK

21. A prefeasibility study has been conducted by PADIS, in cooperation with the European Space Agency to formulate guidelines for further work. The results of the study were presented to the Eight ECA Conference of Ministers held in Tripoli, Libya which directed the ECA Secretariat to further investigate the matter alongside other African programmes that foresee the use of modern telecommunication systems. Subsequently, the PADIS requirements were incorporated in the discussions for appropriate modern telecommunications infrastructures for Africa.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

22. Remarkable achievements have been made since the inauguration of PADIS in the establishment of the Central Coordination Office, the development of norms and standards for the processing of bibliographic information, the satisfactory execution of the referral information system in support of TCDC, and the publishing of indexes on development literature on Africa.

23. It can be surmised that, despite the slow progress made in the proliferation of information systems at the national level, the establishment of the two NIDCs in Benin and the Sudan confirm the viability of the PADIS programme and the seriousness of the approach being staged by the Central Coordination Office to accelerate their creation in other countries. The advantages the establishment sub-regional centres holds for the promotion of I&D activities at the national level has also been confirmed at the series of meetings held in early 1983.

2. WORK PROGRAMME (1984-1987)

I. THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRAL COORDINATION OFFICE (CCO)

24. The Computerized Documentation Section of the CCO will continue to prepare quarterly issues of the DEVINDEX-AFRICA.

25. It is hoped that UNDP will continue to finance the second phase of the referral information system for TCDC when the preliminary phase expires in March, 1984. If so, the activities of the project will be expanded to include information on on-going research and development projects and African institutions that can serve TCDC purposes. This expansion of activities will require the study and design of data collection, processing and dissemination mechanisms in addition to the practical tasks of collecting relevant information, processing it and the publishing of directories. Resources permitting, one directory on each topic and yearly supplements to each directory will be issued. The preparation and publishing of the Directory of African Experts will be maintained.

26. It is expected the financing of the POPIN-Africa project will be secured before the end of 1983. PADIS will provide on the job training to the staff of the Project. It will provide access to the computer system and make available data base management and system analysis support through out the project life time.

27. It is expected the design of the Trade and Finance Information System will be finalized by December 1983 in collaboration with the Trade Division and its financing secured by June 1984. If so, PADIS will assist the Trade Division in executing the Project, in training project staff, providing computer facilities and by providing data base management and system analysis support.

28. The current collection of international data bases (LABORDOC, UNDIESA) will be expanded to include data bases on agriculture, education, energy, science and technology policy, etc. upon completion of negotiations that have been started with FAO and those that have yet to be concluded with UNESCO.

29. Effective June, 1984 SDI (Selective dissemination of information) and current awareness services will be provided on the international as well as the resident data bases on a regular basis.

30. The computerization of the ECA Library will be initiated in the first quarter of 1984. The purpose will be to diversify the sources of information and to gain experience in the automation of libraries.

31. A major promotional effort will be launched in cooperation with the ECA Statistics Division to increase the use of the statistical data base by African countries. The updating and expansion of the data base will continue using the PADIS computer system.

32. The Central Coordination Office will continue to collaborate with UNESCO and IDRC for the establishment of a regional, post graduate school of information science that will basically serve English speaking African countries. If and when established PADIS will make grants and fellowships available to staff of its participating centres. Individuals from French speaking countries will benefit from fellowships to the graduate school of information science in Rabat, Morocco, Five to eight fellowships will be available per annum.

33. A technical meeting of all PADIS participating centres at the national, sub-regional and institutional levels will be held during the last quarter of 1985 or the first quarter of 1986 to discuss and evaluate the impact of the PADIS programme.

34. A technical working group consisting of international authorities in the field will be convened during the second quarter of 1986 to evaluate the implementation of the PADIS programme.

35. Advisory assistance will continue to be provided for the design of new information systems or files along the lines of and under arrangements similar to the ones utilized for the execution of the POPIN-Africa network and the Trade and Finance Information System (See paragraphs 5 and 27). Prospective areas are human settlements, public administration and management, mineral resources, etc.

II. Towards the establishmenttof national centres

36. Intensive, on the job training will be provided to four senior staff of the NIDCs of the Republic of Benin and the Republic of the Sudan, respectively, on site or at the Central Coordination Office of PADIS. The trainees will be

the heads of the documentation, reprography and computer sections of the centres, and possibly, the directors of the centres. This activities will be conducted between January and June 1984.

37. Negotiations for the establishment of national centres, based on the favorable replies already received, will be conducted with the Governments of Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Nigeria and Zaire during the first quarter of 1984. Provided the negotiations are successful, detailed planning for the establishment of two to three centres will be initiated in the second quarter of 1984 and their implementation during the first half of 1985.

38. During the course of 1984, further consultations will be made with the majority of the remaining African countries. It will be difficult to anticipate the outcomes of these consultations or the number of countries that will react favorably. Moreover, the establishment of sub-regional centres will affect both the rate of establishment of national centres and their degree of sophistication.

III. Towards the establishment of sub-regional centres

39. During the period 1984-1987 all four sub-regional centres servicing Eastern and Southern Africa, Central Africa, Western and Northern Africa will be established.

IV. Towards the establishment of institutional particiating centres

40. Current endeavours to establish information system under the aegis of specialized regional organizations will be maintained and expanded. Extensive collaboration is foreseen with the African Development Bank.

V. Data transmission network

41. Negotiations will be conducted with the Government of France, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America to acquire reserved channel capacities on existing communication satellites for the transmission of data between national, sub-regional and regional information and documentation centres and between African centres and those located in the industrialized countries as well as other developing regions.

C. PROJECTIONS UPTO 1989

42. It will be very ampitions to attempt to project the activities and work programme of PADIS upto 1989 in a detailed manner in view of the present extremely low level of development of information infrastructure in Africa. Moreover, the success in programme implementation during 1984-1985 in highly detrimental in setting up priorities for 1988-1989.

43. Therefore, it should suffice to say that during the period 1988-1989 the activities of PADIS in terms of user services, development of infrastructures at the national, sub-regional and regional levels and the establishment of an effective data transmission link will be vigorously expanded.